

9 Bridges State of the Organization – 2016

2016 was another great year for 9 Bridges. While we are still a very young organization going through growing pains, we were able to accomplish some real successes in our second year.

Much of our energy this year was spent on putting on the Annual NW Book Festival, held in Pioneer Courthouse Square at the end of July. This event is one of the few low cost venues for independent authors and publishers to sell their publications. In keeping with our mission to provide free or low cost avenues for authors to promote their work, we kept the prices at 2015 rates, despite fee increases across the board from our vendors.

I'm happy to report that the gamble paid off. The 2016 NW Book Festival was a rousing success. A huge thanks goes out to everyone involved - from the folks who helped set up to those who delivered bottled water around to all of the participants during what turned out to be a hot sunny day. We streamlined processes for registration and setup/ breakdown and it made a real difference. We received a very positive response from all who participated, both during the festival and in a follow-up survey sent out afterwards. We also got some great feedback in how we can make the next one even better.

As a result of higher than expected advertising revenue and a full roster of participants, we were able to generate some needed revenue for 9 Bridges, which helped us end the year with a positive bottom line. The experience was a win-win for everyone involved, and we are looking forward to the next NW Book Festival, set for July 29, 2017. I want to publicly thank our CFO, who did a fantastic job of keeping us in the black all year.

Formalizing our processes and strengthening our organization was our other main area of focus this year. We reviewed our organizational documentation and made a few adjustments to make sure we are fully in compliance with state and federal laws governing non-profits. We made some adjustments to board structure and reviewed our mission. A shout out goes to our wonderful Board Members who worked so hard to make sure all of our ducks are in a row.

2016 was a year of upheaval and this country was left sharply divided at the end of it. Many people felt that they were not being heard, whether during the primary or general elections in this country, or in the months afterwards. There is a lot of fear about the future and it's important that 9 Bridges remains a safe, impartial community where people feel they can be heard. Our goal for 2017 is to continue to provide a haven for writers to find their voices and continue improving their craft. Our hope is that by doing this we can help bring writers from different communities together through focusing on a similar love of writing instead of ideological differences.

Keep Writing!

Elizabyth Harrington,
Executive Director, 9 Bridges